



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE



Office for Standards
in Education

Sandwell College

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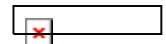
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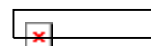
Basic information about the college



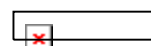
Name of college:	Sandwell College
Type of college:	General Further Education College
Principal:	Douglas Keith
Address of college:	Sandwell College Oldbury Business Centre Pound Road Oldbury West Midlands B68 8NA
Telephone number:	0121 253 6836
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Chair of governors:	Geoffrey Fisher
Unique reference number:	130479
Name of reporting inspector:	Nigel Flood
Date of inspection:	10-14 and 17-21 March 2003

Part A: Summary



Information about the college

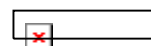


Sandwell College is a large general further education (FE) college situated in the West Midland Metropolitan Borough of Sandwell. The college has campuses at Oldbury, Smethwick, Wednesbury and West Bromwich. Most of the college's courses are provided at the Smethwick and West Bromwich campuses. Courses are also provided at off-site venues and beyond in Sandwell. The college has plans to build a major new campus at West Bromwich and learning centres in six of the borough's towns to replace existing accommodation. The college provides programmes in all areas of learning identified by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), apart from land-based provision. The areas of learning with the largest numbers are: business administration; management and professional; foundation studies; and information and communications technology (ICT). In other areas, such as retail, customer service and transportation, and science and mathematics, the number of students is low. Courses are provided from entry level to level 5. The college provides learning in the community and a small number of work-based learning and Jobcentre Plus programmes. During 2000/01, there were 28,844 enrolments, 83% of students were aged over 19, 54% were female and 51% of minority ethnic origin. Some 72% of students were on part-time courses.

The population of Sandwell in 1991 was 294,800. Unemployment in May 2002 was 5.3% against a national average of 3%. Unemployment in the borough is the second highest in the West Midlands. Manufacturing and production in 1997 contributed 42% of the borough's economic activity, the highest in the West Midlands. In terms of serious deprivation, Sandwell is in 17th place out of 355 of local authorities in England, and has the highest level of deprivation in the West Midlands. Just under 70% of the college's students are from areas of high deprivation. The performance of Sandwell schools in the examination tables published by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is modest. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in 2001 was 34%, against a national average of 48% and the lowest proportion in the West Midlands. In 1991, 15% of the borough's population was from minority ethnic communities. Just over half of the college's students are from these groups.

The college's mission states that 'Sandwell College will be renowned as an excellent provider of vocational education and training. We will do this by continuing to raise the achievements of individuals, communities and business'.

How effective is the college?



The quality of provision was good in three curriculum areas, satisfactory in eight areas and unsatisfactory in three areas. The quality of teaching for adult students was better than for students aged 16 to 18. In 2002, retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 1 and pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 3 and adults at level 1 were below the national average for the sector.

Key strengths

- good attention to the learning needs of individual students

- excellent resources in motor vehicle and sound recording

- a good range of provision to widen participation and support progression

- good support for students

- effective promotion of equality of opportunity

- effective action to improve teaching

- effective governance.

What should be improved

- retention rates for students aged 16 to 18 at level 1

- pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at levels 1 and 3 and adult students at level 1

- the achievement of work-based learners

- unsatisfactory provision in ICT, childcare and humanities

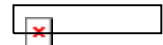
- unsatisfactory curriculum management in some areas

- ineffective use of the management information system

- underdeveloped use of information and learning technology (ILT).

Further aspects of provision requiring improvement are identified in the sections on individual subjects and courses in the full report.

Quality of provision in curriculum and occupational areas



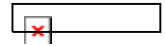
The table below shows overall judgements about provision in subjects and courses that were inspected. Judgements are based primarily on the quality of teaching, training and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects and courses were inspected. Inspectors make overall judgements on curriculum areas and on the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: Outstanding (grade 1), Good (2), Satisfactory (3), Unsatisfactory (4), Very Poor (5)

Area	Overall judgements about provision, and comment
Construction	Satisfactory. Pass rates are high for gas courses, but low on General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses and work-based learning programmes. Teachers help students to develop practical skills to a high standard. Resources are good for electrical, plastering and gas courses, but there are insufficient facilities for brickwork and plumbing courses. Retention rates are declining on foundation courses.
Engineering	Good. Retention and pass rates are high for most students, but pass rates on some electronic courses are low. Teaching and learning are particularly effective and develop students' practical skills to a high standard. There are outstanding resources for motor vehicle and computer-aided design (CAD). Although the provision of work-based learning has improved significantly, successful completion of learning programmes remains low.
Business and administration	Satisfactory. Retention and pass rates at level 2 are high. The quality of teaching and learning is mostly good. Pass rates on GNVQ intermediate, audio transcription at level 1 courses and work-based learning are low. Students' attendance on full-time courses is unsatisfactory.
Management and professional	Satisfactory. Retention rates on most courses are high or above average, but low for work-based learning and accountancy at level 3. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a good range of courses and progression routes, but facilities are inadequate in some areas.

Information and communications technology	Unsatisfactory. Retention rates for full-time students are high, but pass rates on most courses are low. There is insufficient good teaching and a higher than average level of unsatisfactory teaching. Support for students is good. Management of the provision is weak.
Sport, leisure and travel	Good. There is a good range of well-planned courses which meets the needs of students, employers and the community. Teaching is good. There are high pass rates. Links with local schools and the community for sporting activities are very good. There are good links with employers and commerce.
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	Satisfactory. There were good pass rates on body massage, aromatherapy, reflexology and Mendhi courses in 2002. Students' practical and social skills are good. There are some below average retention and pass rates for hairdressing and beauty therapy courses and slow progress in the achievement of key skills. The management of work-based learning is weak; few learners complete their programme of learning successfully.
Childcare	Unsatisfactory. Most pass and retention rates on National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) course at level 2 are low. Students' practical skills are good. Staff pay insufficient attention to feedback on teaching and learning from either students or supervisors of work placements. New managers have made changes to improve standards, but it is too early to judge their effectiveness; some weaknesses remain to be resolved.
Health and social care	Satisfactory. Retention rates on most courses and pass rates on General national Vocational Qualification (NVQ) intermediate and introduction to counselling are high. Pass rates for NVQ courses and GNVQ foundation are consistently low. Support for students is good. Identification development of key skills during lessons is inadequate.
Visual and performing arts	Satisfactory. Provision in the performing arts is good and satisfactory in other curriculum areas. There are high pass and retention rates in performing arts, but most retention rates and achievements in other areas are below average. The most effective teaching is in performing arts; other teaching often fails to maintain students' interest. Management of curriculum areas varies from very good in performing arts to poor in music and sound technology
Humanities	Unsatisfactory. Pass rates in General Certificate of Education Advanced Subsidiary (GCE AS) psychology, GCE A2 sociology and A2 law in 2002 were high. Teaching for GCE Advanced level (GCE A-level) courses is good. Retention and pass rates on GCE AS sociology are low; students are frequently late for lessons and attendance is unsatisfactory. Managers make insufficient use of retention and pass rate data in their efforts to improve student performance. Leadership and management are weak.
English for speakers of other languages	Satisfactory. Pass and retention rates on examination courses are high. There are effective partnership arrangements that contribute to widening participation, and a good range of progression routes. In some lessons, there is a insufficient attention to students' individual learning needs; individual learning plans are insufficiently detailed. There is not enough sharing of good practice.
Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	Good. The well-qualified and experienced staff teach students well. Students are well motivated and make good progress and receive effective support. Access to ICT is inadequate and some software packages are inappropriate.
Literacy and numeracy	Satisfactory. There is much good teaching and specialist support to help students overcome their barriers to learning. There is a wide

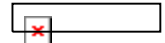
	range of easily accessible venues for courses. There are no formal procedures to ensure that all students requiring literacy and numeracy support receive help. There is little analysis of data to measure success and develop future provision.
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How well is the college led and managed?



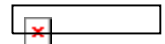
Leadership and management of the college are satisfactory. Governance is effective and governors are strongly committed to the success of the college. Managers have developed successful partnerships with the local community and have widened recruitment on to courses to include many people from groups traditionally under-represented in FE. Since the last inspection in February 2000, effective action has been taken to improve teaching and learning and self-assessment. However, there has been insufficient progress in improving student achievement, some retention rates and the quality of ICT. Curriculum management in some areas is unsatisfactory. The use of the management information system (MIS) to improve performance has been ineffective. The college faces financial pressure arising from the difficulty it experiences in meeting its funding targets.

To what extent is the college educationally and socially inclusive?



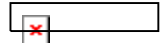
The college's response to education and social inclusion is good. The college is strongly committed to a policy of inclusiveness. It attracts many of its students from groups which have traditionally not taken part in FE. Just over two thirds of students are from areas of high deprivation and around half are from minority ethnic groups. The college has developed a wide range of courses for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and whose first language is other than English. The college provides courses away from its main site in community venues across the borough. Support funds are used well to assist students who would not otherwise be able to stay in education. Childcare places are widely available. The college hosts an annual multi-cultural event the aim of which is to celebrate the diversity of the community.

How well are students and trainees guided and supported?



The college offers a good range of services for the support of students. The college provides useful impartial information, advice and guidance to potential and existing students to help them to make appropriate course and career choices and overcome barriers to learning. Most students find that induction helps them settle into their course. The college has comprehensive welfare services for students including help with accommodation, finance and travel costs, childcare and counselling. It provides a good range of specialist resources for the benefit of students with sensory and/or physical disabilities. However, students who have basic literacy and/or numeracy needs do not always have those needs identified. Tutorial support is satisfactory and is appreciated by the students.

Students' views of the college



Students' views about the college were taken into account and a summary of their main comments is presented below:

What students like about the college

- approachable teachers

- good personal support from tutors

- good educational support from teachers

- the range of welfare service

- useful advice shops

- good progression opportunities

- the range of enrichment activities and additional qualifications

- good childcare facilities

- well-planned learning programmes.

What they feel could be improved

- unsatisfactory facilities and accommodation

- access to resources

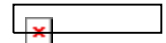
- attention to individual learning needs

- induction programmes for mid-term arrivals

- car parking

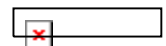
- opportunities for work experience.

Other information

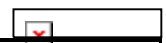


The college inspection report will normally be published 12 working weeks after the formal feedback of the inspection findings to the college. Once published, the college has two months in which to prepare its post-inspection action plan and submit it to the LSC. The college's action plan must show what action the college will take to bring about improvements in response to issues raised in the report. The governors should agree it before it is submitted to the local LSC. The local LSC is responsible for ensuring that, where inspectors have judged there to be unsatisfactory or poor provision in a curriculum area or in leadership and management, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) receives the college's post-inspection action plan within the stipulated two months.

Part B: The college as a whole



Summary of grades awarded to teaching and learning by inspectors



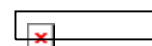
Aspect & learner type	Graded good or better (Grades 1 to 3) %	Graded satisfactory (Grade 4) %	Graded less than satisfactory (Grades 5 to 7) %
Teaching 16-18	59	33	8
19+ and WBL*	65	27	8

Learning 16-18	59	33	8
19+ and WBL*	63	30	7

Key: The range of grades includes: Excellent (Grade 1), Very Good (Grade 2), Good (Grade 3), Satisfactory (Grade 4), Unsatisfactory (Grade 5), Poor (Grade 6) and Very Poor (Grade 7).

*work-based learning

Achievement and standards



1. The exam performance of Sandwell schools in external examinations is low. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A* to C at GCSE in 2001 was 34%, against a national average of 48%. This is the lowest figure for boroughs in the West Midlands. The DfES schools examinations tables for 2001/02 show Sandwell's primary schools were bottom and secondary schools were placed ninth from bottom. The college recruits many of its students aged 16 to 18 from areas where the proportion of students achieving five GCSEs at grade A* to C is below the national average; 69% of the college's students are from areas of high deprivation and 52% from minority ethnic communities. Most of the students at levels 1 and 3 make good progress beyond their previous levels of attainment. At entry level and level 4, attainment is satisfactory, although over 15% of students at level 2 are not making satisfactory progress on prior achievement.

2. Generally, the standard of work of adult students is better than for the work of students aged 16 to 18. Students' vocational skills, particularly in construction, engineering, leisure, sport and travel are good; they are very good in performing arts. The standard of most students' written work ranges from satisfactory to good, and their portfolios of evidence are generally organised effectively. Most students are interested in their studies, although attendance in construction, ICT and humanities lessons was below 70% during the inspection.

3. Overall, the student retention rate is variable. Around 55% of retention rates were above the national average for the sector in 2002. Just over 25% were around the average and the rest were below. Many retention rates declined between 2000 and 2002. Around half of all retention rates between 2000 and 2002 declined by over 5%. About a third remained at a similar point between 2000 and 2002. Over the three years to 2002, most retention rates for key skills stayed above the national average. The number of work-based learners is low compared with the rest of the college's provision; their retention rate is unsatisfactory. Between 1998 and 2003 only 29% of those who started reached the end of their learning programme.

4. Overall student pass rates have not fluctuated significantly. In the three years to 2002, around two thirds of pass rates were close to or above the national average for the sector and the rest were below. Pass rates for key skills have in most instances been low, but in 2002 the rate for adult students was significantly above the national average. Achievement of work-based learners was very low. Between 1998 and 2003, only 17% of those who started their learning programme completed successfully. The achievement of jobs of the college's small number of Jobcentre Plus clients has been very low; less than 5% moved into employment.

16 to 18 year olds

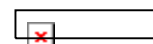
5. Pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 at levels 1 and 3 remained around a similar point. At level 2 and at levels 4 and 5, most rates increased between 2000 and 2002 although there was a significant decline in 2001 at the higher level. Pass rates in 2002, in comparison with national averages, were around the average for the sector at level 2 and the higher level, but were below the average at level 1 and level 3. Most retention rates between 2000 and 2002 for students aged 16 to 18 declined at

levels 1 and 2 by at least 5%. The only exception was for programmes at levels 4 and 5, where there was an increase in the rate, but the numbers of students were low. In 2002, the retention rate at most levels was below the national average for the sector, apart from level 3 where it was over 5% above the average.

Adult learners

6. Most pass rates for adult students, in 2002, were similar to the national averages for the sector. However, at level 1 the rate was nearly 10% below the national average. All pass rates between 2001 and 2002 remained at a similar point apart from short courses, where there was a significant increase. Most pass rates in 2002 were below those for 2000. In 2002, all retention rates were close to or above the national average. Between 2001 and 2002, retention rates remained at a similar point, apart from at levels 4 and 5 where the rate increased.

Quality of education and training



7. Teaching, learning and attainment were graded in 222 lessons across 10 areas of learning covering 14 curriculum areas. Of these lessons, teaching was good or better in 63%, satisfactory in 29% and unsatisfactory in 8%. This profile is at the average for similar colleges for the sector in 2001/02. Teaching was more effective for students aged 19 and over: 66% of teaching was good or better compared with 60% for students aged 16 to 18. The most effective teaching was on level 3 programmes; 71% of teaching was good or better and 6% unsatisfactory. The less effective teaching was on programmes at levels 1 and 2 where, respectively, 55% and 49% of teaching were good or better, and 6% and 13% unsatisfactory. Lessons containing a substantial element of practical work provide the best learning experience for students. There is consistently good teaching and learning in provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and on courses in leisure and tourism. The areas with the smallest amount of good or better teaching are ICT, childcare and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).

8. In most curriculum areas, there are some very effective lessons. They are well planned, link well with previous lessons, have clear aims, use learning resources effectively and ensure that students play a full part in the learning activity. In vocational subjects, the best teaching helps students to understand the theoretical aspects of the subject so that they are able to complete practical tasks well and relate theory to practice in industry. In many curriculum areas, which include engineering, business and administration, hairdressing and beauty therapy, leisure and tourism and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teaching is sound. The lessons are well structured and managed and the learning needs of all students are consistently met through a suitable range of activities. Teachers make good use of detailed notes of students' previous progress to help them to work effectively. Activities include: work in small groups in which tasks are set to challenge all group members; individual assignments in which teachers' expectations match students' capabilities; and question and answer sessions in which questions take account of students' individual learning needs. The teachers in a number of areas, including business and administration and leisure and tourism, make good use of question and answer sessions as a means of checking that students understand the work. In some areas, for example, management and professional studies, health and social care and humanities, teachers do not help their students to learn the work sufficiently thoroughly. In some other lessons, in ICT and humanities, teaching is frequently competent but dull, the pace too slow and for long periods students are expected just to listen and not respond by, for example, asking questions or engaging in discussion.

9. Some curriculum areas have good resources. In motor vehicle and sound recording, the facilities are outstanding. Resources for sport students are poor and there are insufficient facilities for plumbing and brickwork students. A weakness identified at the last inspection was inefficient use of classroom space. There have been improvements but, overall, the use of space remains unsatisfactory. Some upgrading has been made to the accommodation at the Oldbury campus.

However, the visual appearance of most of the accommodation is dull. Some lessons are held in rooms that are not appropriate. Most parts of the building are accessible for wheelchair users. Some off-site accommodation is very good; most is satisfactory. There are insufficient recreational and leisure facilities for students and common room facilities are poor.

10. Despite recent improvements, some students do not have adequate access to ICT resources outside timetabled hours. There are insufficient ICT resources for staff in some curriculum areas. The use of ILT and the college intranet is underdeveloped. Most students are unable to save their work on the college network and have difficulty accessing the intranet from different parts of the college. The college is involved in a national initiative to improve its ICT facilities. It was too early at the time of the inspection to assess its impact. Learning centres are spacious and have a satisfactory stock of books and periodicals and other learning materials, but for many students access to ICT resources and study places are poor at peak times.

11. Most teachers hold appropriate teaching and professional qualifications. Most have good knowledge of their subjects and, where appropriate, have suitable industrial experience. An appropriate range of staff development activities are available to teachers. There are clear links between the staff development plan and strategic plan.

12. In most curriculum areas, assessment arrangements are good and meet awarding body requirements. There is regular and well-recorded assessment of students' work. Written and verbal feedback to students is clear and well understood. Most students are aware of the progress they are making and of their learning targets. Parents, where appropriate, receive regular feedback on students' progress on a termly basis. In most areas, internal verification is well organised and effective. There is some sharing of good practice between teachers, but the process is not sufficiently rigorous on courses in business administration, construction and hairdressing and beauty therapy.

13. Initial assessment is inadequate in some curriculum areas. Although there is a formal system for identifying of the competence level in key skills among full-time students aged 16 to 18 when they are embarking on their programmes, there is insufficient identification of students who require basic literacy and/or numeracy support. Initial assessment of part-time students and adult students is inconsistent.

14. In most curriculum areas, the range of programmes is good and enables students to progress. There are short taster, entry and foundation level programmes to improve access to education. The range of learning available to students is enhanced in many sections by enrichment activities and access to additional qualifications.

15. The college's good links with community and external organisations have helped widen participation and develop the curriculum. Courses are developed to meet local needs and there is a continuing emphasis on improving access to education. The off-site programme is run in over 30 different venues in the local area. Funding for these programmes comes from a range of sources. Courses cover basic skills, ESOL and ICT. There are good links with external agencies that aim to help students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to address any difficulties they may experience while attending college. The college has developed partnership arrangements with local schools to rationalise provision. GCSE and GCE A-level programmes for students who want to retake examinations for these qualifications have been discontinued by the college and the range of traditional GCSE and GCE A-level programmes reduced. Local schools now carry out most of this work. The college's GCE A-level provision consists largely of courses that the schools do not offer. The college's main curriculum aim is occupational provision. Partnerships with the schools are helping the college to realise this aim. Opportunities are being created for young people aged 14 to 18 which provide progression to courses at the college. There are also some effective partnerships between the college and other providers of post-16 education. The partnership with City of Wolverhampton College in media and sound engineering has led to Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status. A number of curriculum areas have developed effective links with industry; these links are underdeveloped in ICT.

16. The college provides useful, impartial information, advice and guidance to potential and existing

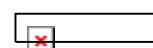
students to help them overcome barriers to learning and make suitable choices of course. Most students find that induction helps them settle into their course well. Students waiting to move to higher education (HE) are provided with a range of services which helps them to achieve their ambition. Students wanting to enter employment or extend their training are provided with guidance on modern apprenticeships and local and national employment opportunities. Each campus has adequately resourced careers areas.

17. The college has comprehensive welfare services to support students. They are helped with accommodation and, where there is a need, receive support with travel costs. The college has access to a range of additional funding sources for the support of students. A college bus service travels between three of the main campuses. The college's nurseries provide an affordable service which includes funding for students who use other childcare providers. The counselling service refers students on to other local specialist agencies where necessary.

18. Learning centres for students who require additional support with literacy and numeracy are situated on each of the four campuses and are equipped with a range of appropriate resources. Individual students can book into the centres, but sometimes the demand for these facilities outstrips supply. Students who need help with literacy and/or numeracy needs do not always have those needs identified sufficiently early. The college provides a good range of specialist resources to support students with sensory and/or physical disabilities. There are some imaginative procedures to address issues of punctuality and attendance, but they are not applied consistently and are not available to all students. For GCE A-level students aged 16 to 18, there are financial incentives to attend regularly, to be punctual and to perform well in examinations. However, these incentives are not available for students on vocational programmes.

19. Tutorial support is satisfactory or better. Students appreciate the tutorial support. Full-time students aged 16 to 18 receive one group tutorial each week and a minimum of one individual tutorial a term. The group tutorials mainly focus on citizenship and issues effecting personal development. Students or their teachers can request additional individual tutorials if there are concerns about attendance or progress. Comprehensive manuals have been produced to support the work of tutors. Full-time adult students have entitlement to individual tutorials. Part-time students are entitled to one tutorial each term.

Leadership and management



20. Leadership and management of the college are satisfactory. The college has made progress in resolving some weaknesses identified at the last inspection including the improvement of the self-assessment process and the standard of teaching. However, the college has not made sufficient progress in tackling weaknesses in ICT, student achievement and the use of MIS.

21. Governors and senior managers set a clear direction for the college. The college's values and strategic priorities are communicated effectively through its mission to the community it serves. Governors, managers and staff contribute effectively to strategic planning. Corporate objectives clearly outline key actions and responsibilities. Progress is regularly reported to governors. Governors are well informed and strongly committed to the college. Good use is made of governors' considerable expertise in the composition and membership of corporation committees. Teaching staff make regular and informative curriculum presentations to governors.

22. All staff are involved in the comprehensive, annual self-assessment process. The self-assessment report makes realistic judgements on the college's performance and identifies actions for improvement. The curriculum area sections of the report make effective use of lesson observations. Since the last inspection, the college has improved teaching and learning through a more rigorous approach to teaching observations. At the last inspection, 53% of the teaching was good or better. At the 2003 inspection, 63% of teaching was graded good or better. Observation

grades awarded by inspectors compared well with the college's own observation grade profile. The well-established annual appraisal system and staff development review have clear links to the college's strategic objectives. The clear policies and procedures for quality assurance activities, which include franchise provision, are supported by regular internal audits.

23. The college has effective external partnerships and a strong commitment to working with the local community. The college contributes well with other organisations, to the development of strategies for regeneration and wider participation. Good collaborative links exist with local secondary schools, college and employers.

24. The college has a strong and effective commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity and has produced clear policies and action plans to cover all aspects of its work. The active minority ethnic staff group makes recommendations on issues of diversity. Equal opportunities issues are covered thoroughly at student and staff induction. The effective promotion of equal opportunities, through staff bulletins and student leaflets, includes the availability of translations into a range of languages spoken in the local communities. There are frequent staff development activities for equal opportunities, including training for managers and governors in managing equality of opportunity, diversity and the implications of the Race Relations Amendment Act. The monitoring of gender, ethnicity and disability is effective. There are clear management and advisory responsibilities, including an equal opportunities and diversity committee which advises on, monitors and helps update college procedures. The committee has identified further measures that take account of legislative changes and recognises the need to extend the targeting of groups under-represented in education. There are clear links between policies and the college's inclusive learning strategy.

25. College managers have not been successful in improving pass rates for students aged 16 to 18 since the last inspection. The impact of some action plans is not evaluated until the end of the academic year in which they are drawn up. In two curriculum areas, the performance of courses is not routinely judged against targets and there is no operational accountability when courses fail to achieve agreed targets. The college has acknowledged in its own self-assessment report the need to improve the monitoring of some curriculum action plans and target setting.

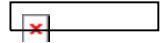
26. Curriculum management is satisfactory in most areas and unsatisfactory in some. In the more effective areas, realistic targets are set for recruitment, retention and pass rates and good use is made of MIS data and national statistics to analyse and monitor performance. There are, in most instances, standard lesson plans, schemes of work and coherent teaching strategies that meet the needs of students at all levels. There are clear lines of accountability and most staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Communication within teams is mostly good, including with franchise partners. Regular staff newsletters, development days and campus meetings assist communications across the college. However, communications between campuses is unsatisfactory in some curriculum areas. In a number of curriculum areas, unsatisfactory retention and pass rates have not improved since the last inspection. In two areas, there is little or no evidence that a strategy has been developed for dealing with the declining retention and pass rates. Management of work-based learning and Jobcentre Plus provision has not raised the achievement of learners and clients. There have been recent changes in the management of work-based learning. However, at the time of the inspection, it was too soon to judge the impact.

27. The college has made some progress in improving MIS since the last inspection. However, it has consistently failed to make its returns to the LSC on time. Although the quality of information held by MIS has improved, some curriculum areas do not provide regular updates on student data, which has led to discrepancies between the data held on MIS and those held by curriculum areas. Some managers do not make full use of the MIS data and reports. There is poor analysis of MIS by some curriculum areas and poor understanding and use of MIS to improve performance and identify trends over time.

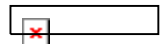
28. The college faces severe financial pressure arising from the difficulty it experiences in meeting its funding targets. It has attempted to resolve this important matter by increasing the level of its franchise provision. The present level of franchise work is significantly above the target set by the college. The college has increased the class contact time of teachers with students by 20% over the three years to 2002. At the time of the inspection, the college was introducing systems to improve

the deployment of resources, but it was too soon to judge the impact of this work. The college has insufficient information on course costs to enable a judgement to be formed on whether or not the provision offers good value for money.

Part C: Curriculum and occupational areas



Construction



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates on gas courses

- the good practical skills of students

- good teaching in practical classes

- good resources in electrical, plastering and gas vocational areas

- effective systems for recording, monitoring and tracking students' progress.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GNVQ courses

- declining retention rates on foundation courses

- insufficient facilities in brickwork and plumbing

- poor attendance and late arrival of students in some lessons.

Scope of provision

29. The broad range of construction courses, mostly at foundation and intermediate level, meet the requirements of students and local industry effectively. The lack of provision at level 3 gas fitting reduces opportunities for student progression. Provision is offered on a full-time and part-time basis on block release and at evening classes, and through short courses. Course attendance arrangements are flexible and meet the needs of students and employers. Programmes for schools give pupils the opportunity to sample the construction trades and help them make decisions on future careers. At the time of the last inspection, there were 1,208 construction students, mostly adults on part-time courses. Just over 10% of enrolments were students aged 16 to 18 and around two thirds of these were full time. Of the 84 work-based learners, 21 were advanced modern apprentices, 52 were foundation modern apprentices and 1 young person was on a work-based learning NVQ programme.

Achievement and standards

30. Retention rates on most programmes are good. There has been a steady decline over the three years to 2002 in the retention rate on foundational craft level courses. The rate on GNVQ foundation construction courses was poor, particularly in 1999/2000. Pass rates for gas courses are very high, well above the national averages for the sector. Although there has been a decline, pass rates over the three years to 2002 on craft courses at intermediate and advanced level were well above the national average and at foundation level were at the average. Records of student progress and the standard of their work show that most should achieve their learning goals in 2002/03. The pass rates for work-based learning over the last four years have been very low. Only 10% completed their programmes of learning successfully. Retention rates for all work-based learners before 2002/03 were low, but have improved significantly in 2002/03.

31. Students' vocational skills are good. For example, students paint and hang wallpaper well, install varied wiring systems competently, construct intricate pipe systems and use good brickwork skills to build cavity walls and arches. Students in wood occupations have the ability to finish products to a high standard for site work and furniture making. Plastering students have very high levels of hand tool skills and have mastered well the rhythmic movement for good plastering well. Many students achieve additional qualifications which increase their employability and provide employers with students who can adapt well to the changing needs of industry. Well-presented student portfolios contain a good range of evidence. Student attendance is low. It was 9% below the rest of the college during the inspection and below the average for construction provision nationally. In a few lessons, students frequently arrive late.

A sample of retention and pass rates in construction, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation construction and the built environment	1	No. of starts	*	**	33
		% retention	*	11	61
		% pass rate	*	0	0
Foundation vocational crafts	1	No. of starts	190	217	188
		% retention	71	64	63
		% pass rate	75	82	59
Intermediate vocational	2	No. of starts	244	73	143

crafts		% retention	81	82	85
		% pass rate	76	83	56
Advanced vocational crafts	3	No. of starts	38	58	31
		% retention	87	60	77
		% pass rate	45	37	33
Gas vocational short courses; over 24 weeks	3	No. of starts	749	754	610
		% retention	99	100	98
		% pass rate	100	96	96

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

** less than 15 starts

Quality of education and training

30. The teaching of practical subjects is good. Teachers develop students' practical skills to a high standard. Students value the help they receive from teachers. Lesson aims and objectives are shared with students and they have a clear understanding of what is required of them. Key skills are skilfully linked to construction topics through good, subject-related assignments and projects. Effective use of evidence from the workplace is used for key skills assessment. In some theory lessons, students are not motivated and the pace of learning is too slow. Overhead transparencies can not always be read at the back of a classroom. In work-based learning, there is little planning and co-ordination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. College staff make few checks to ensure that the work carried out by the employer covers the requirements of the NVQ.

31. Resources for electrical, plastering and gas courses are good. Staff are well qualified and industrially experienced. Practical areas are spacious, clean and tidy. The range of hand tools is good. Practical lessons have good technician support. Equipment is modern and compares well with industry. In brickwork and plumbing, accommodation is inadequate. For example, although there is good use of outdoor areas for brickwork, if the weather is poor there is no alternative area and lessons have to be cancelled and substituted by a theory class.

32. Systems to monitor and track students' progress are good. Well-designed wall charts and diaries for recording work are kept in workshops. Students can view these records at any time to determine their achievement to date and to register what is required of them if they are to achieve their intended goal. Good records maintained by teachers on how students are progressing back up the diaries and wall charts.

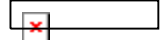
33. Students are very appreciative of the good subject support provided by teachers. There is little pastoral support in tutorials. Students' progress reviews in some areas are weak. They lack sufficiently detailed short-term target setting. Equal opportunities and health and safety are part of the review process, but the opportunity is missed to emphasise their significance. Of the six plumbing foundation modern apprentices, only one has a work placement. These apprentices have had little work-based training or opportunity to gather evidence or be assessed.

Leadership and management

34. Leadership and management of construction are satisfactory. The curriculum manager has a good understanding of the issues facing construction provision and is making improvements. The clear strategic plan has focused on improving the range of provision at levels 2 and 3. Teachers and managers meet regularly and establish the action points needed to resolve issues. Teachers have contributed effectively to the self-assessment process and to target setting. Managers and teachers

make good use of data compiled by the college to improve student pass and retention rates and to monitor progress.

Engineering



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high retention rates on most courses

- very high pass rates on level 1 craft and CAD courses

- good teaching and learning

- the high standard of students' practical work and attainment

- very good resources in motor vehicle and CAD

- strong links with local motor vehicle employers

- significant improvements in the provision of work-based learning.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on electronic servicing courses

- unsatisfactory achievement on work-based learning programmes

- poor lesson planning in some lessons

- poor understanding and use of MIS

- insufficient sharing of good practice.

Scope of provision

35. The good range of engineering courses, particularly in motor vehicle, meets the needs of local employers and students well. Courses range from levels 1 to 4 and include GNVQ, Higher National Certificate (HNC) and NVQ. Provision is offered on a full-time basis, block release, and part-time day release or evening classes. Some 45% of students are adults. Those aged 16 to 18 are mainly on NVQ programmes. Most students on electronics and computer engineering courses and part-time evening classes are adults. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,376 students on engineering courses. Work-based learning enrolments included 23 advanced modern apprentices, 63 foundation modern apprentices and 14 young people on work-based learning NVQ.

Achievement and standards

36. Retention rates on most college-based programmes are high. In 2002, at level 2 and 3, apart from the CAD, all retention rates were above 90%. At level 1, in 2002, retention rates for GNVQ foundation engineering and basic engineering competencies were significantly above the national average for the sector. Retention rates on the CAD course, although improving, were below the national average. Pass rates in 2002 were outstanding on City and Guilds 2010 basic engineering competencies at level 1, City and Guilds 2301-02 CAD competencies at level 2 and NVQ in vehicle mechanical and electronic systems at level 3. Pass rates for electronic serving qualifications and GNVQ foundation in engineering have been low. Retention and pass rates on work-based learning programmes are unsatisfactory. Over the five years to 2002, only 25% of work-based learners completed their programme of learning successfully.

37. Students are motivated, confident and interested in their studies. Attendance for engineering lessons is high. In lessons, students' questions to teachers are carefully thought out. Students' practical skills are good and they make good progress on prior levels of attainment. In motor vehicle body repair, students replace door body skins swiftly, accurately and to high standards. In work-based learning, learners have good technical skills and complete tasks well and with the minimum of supervision. Students, when working in small teams, are good at solving technical problems. Students and work-based learners are effective at collecting evidence for their well-organised portfolios. The college has established a successful record in competitions. A body repair student who won the UK Skills competition took part in the World Skills Olympics in South Korea.

A sample of retention and pass rates in engineering, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation engineering	1	No. of starts	**	28	20
		% retention	70	68	75
		% pass rate	71	43	45
City and Guilds 3980	1	No. of starts	31	**	*

vehicle body competencies		% retention	65	60	*
		% pass rate	85	100	*
City and Guilds 2240 electronic servicing part 2	2	No. of starts	22	32	**
		% retention	91	97	93
		% pass rate	59	33	45
City and Guilds 2301-02 CAD competencies	2	No. of starts	**	19	26
		% retention	55	74	77
		% pass rate	100	79	100
NVQ vehicle mechanical and electronic systems	3	No. of starts	*	17	62
		% retention	*	88	95
		% pass rate	*	100	92
National certificate in engineering (two year)	3	No. of starts	49	65	**
		% retention	94	82	92
		% pass rate	94	82	42

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course not offered

** less than 15 starts

Quality of education and training

38. Most teaching and learning are purposeful and of a good standard. Much of the most effective teaching is in electronic and motor vehicle provision. Most teachers meet students' individual learning needs well. Teachers employ humour effectively to gain the interest of students. They are particularly good at linking the theory and practical aspects of learning. Students appreciate how a good understanding of theory ensures that practical tasks can be accomplished more effectively. Teachers use resources well to improve students' knowledge and learning. Employers provide a wide range of relevant work experience opportunities in the workplace for work-based learners.

39. Some lesson planning is good. However, some plans have insufficient detail to clarify what is to take place. Some plans do not always link to the main learning activity. For example, in one lesson on examination preparation, the plan related only to 20% of the students; as the rest of the students were exempt from the examinations, they spent their time on a different exercise. There is little planning of on-the-job training for work-based learners. Learners rely mainly on production tasks to develop their vocational skills.

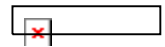
40. Teaching staff hold appropriate professional, teaching and assessor qualifications and have relevant trade experience. The resources in the CAD and motor vehicle sections are outstanding. Students' work on a range of the latest vehicles and use modern equipment. The well-equipped library area has insufficient space for other than a small group of people. Computers are not always accessible to students between lessons. Health and safety requirements are mostly met, but some students' footwear is inappropriate and they leave personal clothing on workshop floors.

41. Assessment and internal verification are effective. Students' understanding of the assessment is good. Recording of information during workplace visits is adequate. However, during these visits vocationally relevant learning targets are not set. Partnerships with motor vehicle employers are particularly good and they are kept well informed on their employees' progress. Initial assessment identifies students' basic skills needs effectively. Students are provided with good individual additional support which helps them achieve their learning goals.

Leadership and management

42. Management of this curriculum area is good. Targets are set for student achievement. Staff are appraised and there is regular observation of teaching. Staff are provided with regular training opportunities to improve their performance. Teachers, assessors and programme managers meet regularly. Measures have been devised to resolve previous poor performance in work-based learning. Since the September 2002, learner recruitment and initial assessment have become more thorough, there are more regular visits to learners to review progress, the teaching of key skills has improved, learners are making better progress and achieving NVQ units and learning support is stronger. Managers make little use of the analysis of trends in pass and retention rates, particularly for work-based learning. There is insufficient sharing of good practice.

Business and administration



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates in business administration courses at level 2

- good teaching and learning

- extensive and effective professional development activities for staff.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and audio transcription at level 1

- low attendance on full-time business courses

- inadequate access to ICT facilities for full-time business students.

Scope of provision

43. The college provides a wide range of courses in business and administration for full-time and part-time students from foundation to level 3. Most courses are provided at the West Bromwich Campus. Office technology and some other specialist vocational courses are offered in community venues across the borough. In addition, there are specialist vocational courses for medical and legal

secretaries. At the time of the inspection, there were 1,216 students on business and administration courses. Around a fifth of students are full time of which just under two thirds are aged 16 to 18. Just over four fifths of adult students are part time. Work-based learning enrolments included three advanced modern apprentices, 15 foundation modern apprentices and five young people on work-based learning NVQ.

Achievement and standards

44. Pass and retention rates in business administration courses at level 2 are high or very high. Retention rates for students on audio transcription II part 2 course have been outstanding at 100% in 2001 and 2002. Pass rates for business administration qualifications at level 2 have improved over the three years to 2002, to significantly above the national average. Pass rates for advanced GNVQ/Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) have also improved significantly over the same period, but retention rates have declined to well below the national average for the sector. Pass rates on GCE AS business and intermediate GNVQ were well below the national average in 2002. Retention and pass rates on work-based learning programmes are poor. Over the five years to 2002, only 7% of work-based learners completed their programme of learning successfully.

45. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. There is little difference between the work of students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. Students' written work is satisfactory and portfolios of evidence are generally organised effectively. Most students make sound progress on previous levels of attainment. Students' vocational skills meet the standards required by industry. Most students are interested in their studies, although attendance is unsatisfactory at lessons on full-time business courses for students aged 16 to 18. During the week of the inspection, attendance for these lessons was only 64%. Part-time students in office technology make good progress from foundation to level 3. Many full-time business students have used the qualifications gained at college for entry into HE.

A sample of retention and pass rates in business and administration, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Oxford Cambridge and RSA text processing (one year)	1	No. of starts	226	179	160
		% retention	81	80	74
		% pass rate	64	68	75
Audio transcription (one year)	1	No. of starts	85	75	75
		% retention	68	75	76
		% pass rate	59	55	53
OCR word processing II pt 1	1	No. of starts	9	40	156
		% retention	67	76	71
		% pass rate	33	11	47
OCR word processing II pt 2	2	No. of starts	141	89	82
		% retention	67	76	71
		% pass rate	73	81	87
Audio transcription II pt 2	2	No. of starts	28	29	41
		% retention	96	90	89
		% pass rate	67	81	87
GNVQ intermediate business	2	No. of starts	42	36	28
		% retention	81	86	79
		% pass rate	56	42	43
GCE AS business	3	No. of starts	*	64	15

		% retention	*	95	73
		% pass rate	*	59	45
GNVQ advanced/AVCE business	3	No. of starts	96	43	18
		% retention	95	88	50
		% pass rate	60	68	88

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course not offered

Quality of education and training

46. Most teaching and learning are good or better. Generally, teaching and learning for adults are better than that for students aged 16 to 18. Planning of lessons is good. Most lesson plans and schemes of work are comprehensive and thorough. A particularly useful feature of planning, in the more effective lessons, is the use of short-term targets for each lesson based on how students' performed in the previous lesson. The detailed individual plans for each lesson for those students who require additional learning support are another positive aspect of planning. At the start of each lesson, teachers provide students with clear introductions and objectives. They regularly check through effective questioning that students understand the work. In office technology lessons, teachers are particularly effective at taking account of the different levels of ability of students and providing them all with good individual support.

47. The level of staff development in business and administration is good. In particular, managers encourage staff to pursue further professional development and most staff have taken up opportunities to improve their teaching and professional skills. Staff development needs are determined through the teaching observation programme, staff appraisal and the priorities of the strategic plan. The extensive range of staff training includes updating on industrial skills, teaching and assessment training and ICT and counselling courses.

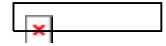
48. Teachers are well qualified and have good subject knowledge. Full-time business students have access to ICT equipment in a learning resource centre. There are often insufficient computers for students to use. Much of the ICT equipment is old and slow, and does not meet the needs of students.

49. Assessment and verification for college-based courses are effective. Assessment of vocational qualifications is poor for those learners who are assessed in the workplace by a sub-contractor. Tutors provide students with a good level of support on a wide range of topics. Support for literacy and numeracy and vocational skills have helped students achieve their qualifications aim. In response to the low attendance of business students aged 16 to 18, the college has introduced a new system to improve attendance including telephone calls and home visits. At the time of the inspection, it was too early to judge the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

Leadership and management

50. Curriculum management in business and administration is satisfactory. There is a regular programme of staff meetings. Arrangements for quality assurance are sufficiently thorough and have led to improvements in the standard of teaching and learning, but retention and pass rates remain uneven. Recently appointed managers have started to make effective use of MIS data to locate weaknesses and launch action to improve poor performance. For example, they recognised that declining recruitment of students aged 16 to 18 was a weakness and began to promote courses more widely, which has led to some improvement in enrolments. Equality of opportunity is promoted extensively at induction and through the teaching programmes.

Management and professional



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on the certificate in management course in 2002
- good retention rates on many courses
- a good range of courses and progression opportunities
- good pre-entry advice and guidance.

Weaknesses

- low achievement of work-based learners
- low pass rates in accountancy level 3
- low attendance and late arrival to lessons on some courses
- inadequate facilities in some areas
- inadequate consolidation of learning.

Scope of provision

51. The college offers a good range of management and professional courses. Full-time and part-time courses are available during the day and in the evening. There are over 35 professional qualifications available. Courses are offered from levels 2 to 5. Progression routes are well established and can lead to membership of professional bodies, including the Association of

Accounting Technicians (AAT), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply. At the time of the inspection, there were over 800 management and professional students, mostly adults studying part time. Work-based learning enrolments in accountancy included four advanced modern apprentices, five foundation modern apprentices and six young people on work-based learning NVQ.

Achievement and standards

52. Retention rates on the NVQ accounting at level 4, the certificates of management and personnel practice course have been outstanding and on the purchasing and supply certificate course, retention rates have improved significantly over the three years to 2002. Pass rates on the certificate of management course improved significantly over the same period to well above the national average. High pass rates have been maintained on the certificate in purchasing and supply. Although the pass rate for the certificate in personnel practice was outstanding in 2001, it declined to below the national average in 2002. NVQ accounting at levels 3 and 4 have declined over the three years, but there has been an improvement during the same period for NVQ accounting at level 2. Retention and pass rates on work-based learning programmes are unsatisfactory. Over the five years to 2002, only 25% of learners completed their programme of learning successfully.

53. Students' work in lessons is mostly satisfactory and on most higher level courses it is good. Students are working at the standard and level of attainment appropriate to the course they are undertaking. For example, NVQ level 3 accountancy students can prepare final accounts from incomplete records for a range of situations. In case study work, management students are able to use knowledge of disciplinary procedures and legal constraints to suggest appropriate actions.

A sample of retention and pass rates in management and professional, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ accounting	2	No. of starts	59	44	47
		% retention	79	71	74
		% pass rate	57	61	70
NVQ accounting	3	No. of starts	58	48	35
		% retention	77	94	91
		% pass rate	50	50	45
Certificate in personnel practice	3	No. of starts	25	29	25
		% retention	96	100	100
		% pass rate	83	100	84
Certificate in management	3	No. of starts	48	17	35
		% retention	100	100	100
		% pass rate	69	71	91
Certificate in administrative management	3	No. of starts	*	15	15
		% retention	100	87	87
		% pass rate	100	77	60
NVQ accounting	4	No. of starts	56	25	38
		% retention	95	96	97
		% pass rate	50	50	45

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

**less than 15 starts*

Quality of education and training

54. Most lessons are well planned and have clear aims and objectives. Learning materials are clearly linked to the teaching. Good use is made of diagrams and illustrations. As well as topic information, learning materials contain a range of supplementary data to make the work more interesting to students. On the course for the certificate in administrative management, workplace experience is used well to illustrate management principles as they apply in practice. For example, one student was able to use the introduction of a new telephone exchange at work as the subject for a successful college project. On accountancy courses, past exam questions are used effectively to develop an appropriate response. Advice on the best way to answer examination questions is illustrated with a range of relevant examples.

55. In many lessons, insufficient revision of topics reduces the effectiveness of learning. Students often do not give their full attention to the work. Teachers do not question students sufficiently to check that they understand the lesson and to assess individual progress. Questions are often directed at the same students to the exclusion of others. Attendance is low and students are not punctual on a range of courses. When students arrive late for lessons, they are not routinely challenged for the reason for the lateness. In a small number of classes, where there were less than six students, the teacher found it difficult to maintain discussion.

56. Some teaching occurs in rooms that are inappropriate for the size of the group. Overhead projections are difficult to read as they are regularly made on to inadequate screens. The learning centre for management and professional students is small and cramped and does not offer adequate facilities for private study. The number of computers within the centre is inadequate to meet the needs of students. They are not all able to access facilities at busy times and thus some miss the opportunity to use specialist software relevant to their courses.

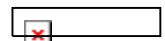
57. Assessment and verification are effective. Work is regularly assessed and marked and most is returned within an agreed timescale. Moderation of the marking of assignments is effective. Some feedback is insufficiently clear and fails to help students to identify the weaknesses and learn how to improve their work. Employers do not receive regular feedback on students' progress. There is an inadequate range of enrichment activities.

58. Students value the help and support they receive from tutors. The standard of pre-course guidance for students is impartial and good. Staff are very knowledgeable about the range of courses on offer and potential career routes available. Good guidance is provided on alternative learning routes. Initial assessment is appropriate and takes account of individual learning needs. Late entrants do not always receive a full induction. Part-time students are not fully aware of the range of welfare and counselling services that the college provides.

Leadership and management

59. Management of the provision is generally good. A few class sizes are very small. Realistic targets are set for recruitment, retention and pass rates. Strategies to improve performance have had varying levels of success. There are clear lines of accountability and staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Staff contribute to strategic planning and self-assessment. They attend conferences, chair local branches of professional institutions and regularly attend staff training activities. Not all areas used by management and professional student are accessible to students with mobility difficulties, but adequate alternative arrangements are made to meet their needs.

Information and communication technology



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- the high rate of retention of full-time students

- the good standard of work in students' files

- effective support for students

- good ICT resources in outreach centres.

Weaknesses

- low pass rates on most courses

- low attendance and a poor record on punctuality in many courses

- inadequate advice and guidance on enrolments to part-time courses

- underdeveloped links with industry

- some unsatisfactory teaching

- lack of accountability in the management of ICT

- poor internal communications across ICT.

Scope of provision

60. The college offers an appropriate range of courses to meet individual and community needs. There is a range of full-time courses in ICT at levels ranging from basic computer literacy to HE programmes. Vocational computing courses such as the AVCE ICT course, the GNVQ courses at intermediate level and the HNC courses are provided by the school of technology. Office ICT courses such as computer literacy and information technology (CLAIT), the European computer driving licence (ECDL) and the Integrated Business Technology (IBT) course form part of the provision of the school of business. There is also a range of part-time courses operating in a number of community venues during the day, in the evening and at weekends covering CLAIT, IBT, ECDL and City and Guilds 7261. The college has recently been involved in a collaborative initiative to widen participation. At the time of the inspection, there are 261 students aged 16 to 18 and 1,384 students aged 19 and over. Most of the students aged 16 to 18 are full time and most of the students aged 19 and over are part time.

Achievement and standards

61. In the three years to 2002, retention rates on most courses have been above the national average for the sector. There have been particularly good retention rates on full-time courses for students aged 16 to 18, most were significantly above the national average and some reached 100%. However, pass rates are very low in most areas; many are more than 20% below the national averages. There is very little difference between the work of students aged 16 to 18 and adult students. Most students are interested in their studies, although attendance is low and the record for punctuality is poor. The quality of most students' work is satisfactory and they make adequate progress on prior levels of attainment. The students who attend regularly are learning well and are developing appropriate levels of knowledge and social practical skills. The standard of work in their files is good and some students' work is creative and imaginative. In one of the better lessons, students were particularly adept at manipulating software so it ran more efficiently and effectively, at greater speed and was more responsive to the needs of the operator. Students are confident in what they are doing and are proud of their achievements. Progression between courses is satisfactory.

A sample of retention and pass rates in information and communications technology, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
CLAIT	1	No. of starts	948	1,146	1,047
		% retention	84	85	84
		% pass rate	62	46	49
GNVQ intermediate IT	2	No. of starts	*	37	**
		% retention	*	100	79
		% pass rate	*	8	36
IBT 2	2	No. of starts	224	264	354
		% retention	83	80	84
		% pass rate	61	63	60
GCE A2 I	3	No. of starts	46	40	72
		% retention	89	85	83
		% pass rate	40	36	64
GNVQ advanced/AVCE	3	No. of starts	42	27	99
		% retention	88	63	81
		% pass rate	53	82	27

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

** course did not run*

*** fewer than 15 starts*

Quality of education and training

62. Although most teaching is satisfactory or better, only 40% is good or better and 13% is unsatisfactory. The most effective lessons are well planned and prepared, the range of learning activities is appropriate and teachers make good use of the technology available. In most practical lessons, students are well supported individually. Students tackle tasks enthusiastically and produce good work. Some teaching is inappropriate or dull, the planning is ineffective and teachers fail to take sufficient account of students' differing needs. For some full-time students aged 16 to 18, new topics are introduced too slowly and too little encouragement is given to them to respond to the teaching, to listen and ask questions. For some part-time adult students in community venues, activities take place in too much of a rush and do not take account of the wide range of learning needs within the group. For example, during a practical demonstration, the teacher spoke rapidly, completed the task too fast and did not check that students understood the work as the lessons progressed. However, many students could not see the computer screen and could not follow the demonstration. Teaching in community venues is not sufficiently well planned and inadequately linked to qualification aims and assessment activities.

63. Resources in classrooms are adequate but, in general, accommodation is dowdy. Some classrooms are cramped and lack adequate ventilation. Some community venues have good resources, up-to-date computers and a good range of learning materials. College library resources are adequate for ICT students. However, for some students, for example, those on AVCE courses, there is insufficient access to up-to-date hardware and software resources outside timetabled hours.

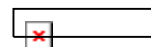
64. Assessment and internal verification meet awarding body requirements. Students' progress is tracked effectively. The progress of AVCE students is effectively checked against deadlines and those falling behind are offered additional support to help them catch up. ECDL and CLAIT students usually take assessments when they consider they are ready. Feedback is satisfactory and contains clear guidance on how students can improve.

65. Not all students are interviewed before enrolment by staff with expertise in ICT, and some students are placed on courses at an inappropriate level. There is no initial assessment of students' vocational skills. There are inadequate links with industry and insufficient opportunities for students on vocational courses to become familiar with current industrial practice through their work in college or through work placements.

Leadership and management

66. Management is weak. There is insufficient overall co-ordination and management of ICT in the college. Some improvements have been made since the last inspection, but management arrangements are failing to raise standards. Since the last inspection, managers have failed to improve the pass rates significantly and many remain well below national averages and college targets. Target setting is ineffective. Retention and pass rates are mainly set against general college targets and little reference is made to national averages for similar colleges in the sector or to averages of individual courses. There is no operational accountability when courses fail to reach agreed targets. Management information is not used effectively to improve key aspects of the provision. For example, low attendance and persistent late arrival are long standing weaknesses on many courses and there has been no evidence of significant improvement over time. Staff teaching ICT are based in different faculties that operate independently of each other. In ICT, managers have inadequate overall control and insufficient accountability. There is also insufficient sharing of good practice, resources and expertise between staff across the range of courses. There is a programme of staff development activities to support all teachers. However, there is insufficient industrial updating for staff. Communication within faculties is good, but poor across the three faculties involved in the provision of ICT.

Sport, leisure and travel



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- a high level of achievement

- good teaching

- effective personal and vocational tutorials

- good standards of work by of students

- an effective range of courses and of additional qualifications

- strong partnerships with commerce, community, schools and HE.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on level 1 sport and the part-time evening course for the diploma in health and fitness instruction

- poor achievement on level 3 sport

- insufficient use of prior attainment data in setting students' target grades.

Scope of provision

67. The college provides a good range of sport, leisure and travel courses at levels 1, 2 and 3 for full-time students, mainly aged 16 to 18. There is a useful range of vocational part-time day and

evening courses for adult students. Courses lead to first and GNVQ awards at foundation and intermediate levels, or to national diplomas or AVCE at level 3. The part-time courses lead to a wide range of vocational awards, many of which can be achieved as an additional qualification by full-time students. At the time of the inspection, there were 121 full-time and 58 part-time students. About half of the full-time students are on travel and half on sport programmes. Two thirds of the part-time students are on sport courses and one third on travel courses. The college has offered sport and recreation work-based learning programmes, but at the time of the inspection there were no students on these programmes.

Achievement and standards

68. Most pass rates are good. On travel courses they have improved to well above national averages for the sector. The pass rates in the first diploma in sport are good and above the national average for the sector. There are very good results in vocational awards for travel and for sports coaching and leadership. The pass rate on the national diploma in sport remains below the national average. There is generally a good retention rate in travel and sport. However, retention rates on levels 1 and 3 in sport declined in 2002 to below national averages, but the in-year retention figures for 2003 show some improvement for level 3. At the time of inspection, the retention rate on the part-time evening course in health and fitness instruction was low, at 33%. There is good progression from level 1 to level 2 and level 3 courses. Most students, after completing their course, obtain jobs in their vocational areas and most of those who want to move to HE succeed in doing so.

69. Students' work at level 1 is good. Their oral presentations are good and their portfolios show significant progress in writing, in the organisation and completion of work and in their understanding of the vocational contexts. At levels 2 and 3, most students produce good written work. Assignments and portfolios of evidence are well organised and presented. They contain a good range of work, carefully linked to the requirements of the qualification. The work is based on a good, vocationally relevant, accurate and up-to-date technical information. However, there is insufficient use of ICT in their assignments. Students on sports courses produce good work in well-planned theory lessons. They make very good progress in completing group tasks and in analysing factors that affect personal effectiveness, performance and training. They are confident and highly motivated in practical work where they develop good sports skills, and organise and run coaching sessions for pupils from the local primary schools and in the community.

A sample of retention and pass rates in sport, leisure and travel, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
City and Guilds progression award sport	1	No. of starts	*	15	17
		% retention	80	60	41
		% pass rate	100	44	43
GNVQ intermediate leisure and tourism	2	No. of starts	30	29	19
		% retention	87	59	84
		% pass rate	69	82	81
GNVQ advanced/national diploma	3	No. of starts	*	17	17
		% retention	45	76	73
		% pass rate	40	77	100
National diploma in sport	3	No. of starts	*	16	19
		% retention	73	81	63
		% pass rate	50	46	58

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

**less than 15 starts*

Quality of education and training

70. Teaching is good and well planned. Teachers use a suitable range of teaching and learning methods and make effective use of topical commercial and vocational materials. They pay careful attention to students' learning needs and regularly check that students understand the work. They ask skilful questions related to learning objectives and, even when students answer incorrectly, ensure that the correct answer is clear to the whole class. In the most effective lessons, teachers have the confidence to exploit unanticipated learning opportunities. There is insufficient use of ICT in vocational classes for travel or sport. Teaching and learning are linked effectively to industrial and commercial practice.

71. Sports students improve their learning as a consequence of their regular coaching and sports leadership activities at local primary and secondary schools, local authority leisure and sport departments and community organisations. Travel students benefit through their work in the college's Association of British Travel Agents bonded travel agency. For most students, there are educational visits in the United Kingdom and overseas. The curriculum area has very strong and effective links with travel employers, schools, community organisations and HE institutions.

72. Assessment is accurate and well organised, and internal verification is effective. Assignment briefs are well planned and vocationally demanding. Tasks and objectives are clear and students are aware of the standards required for pass, merit or distinction grades. Teachers provide regular feedback on students' progress and how they might improve further.

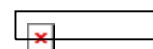
73. Students receive good personal tutorial support and guidance. The well-taught and regular group tutorials introduce students to an important range of topics including citizenship and progression in their education and training. Students attend regular one-to-one tutorials where progress is reviewed against their individual learning plans. They also receive regular review tutorials from their vocational tutors. There is insufficient use of prior attainment data in tutorial work. Tutors do not set minimum target grades based on prior achievement.

74. Resources for practical work in travel are good and include a wide range of current brochures. Students benefit from the college's travel shop which is used for realistic work experience and assignment support. Resources for sport students are poor; much equipment is out-of-date. There are good displays of students' recent work in all the sport and travel classrooms. ICT resources are overcrowded at peak times and are slow. There is little use of information technology (IT) in the classrooms used for travel and sport.

Leadership and management

75. Management and leadership of the curriculum are good. Teamwork and communications are particularly effective. Regular team meetings deal well with issues and review the curriculum area's performance effectively. Curriculum documentation is well organised. Staff and course leaders have good knowledge of the retention and pass rate data and national averages. There is a good tracking system to measure progress against targets for attainment and retention rates. There is insufficient use of prior attainment data to help students to improve their achievements.

Hairdressing and beauty therapy



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Contributory grade for work-based learning is **poor (grade 5)**

Strengths

- high pass rates on the body massage certificate
- the good practical skills of students
- very good teaching in beauty and holistic therapy
- the flexible organisation of courses for the benefit of students
- good initial advice
- good tutorial support.

Weaknesses

- below average retention rates on hairdressing at NVQ level 2
- unsatisfactory achievement on work-based learning programmes
- slow progress in the achievement of key skills
- lack of thorough internal verification
- a slow response to students' basic skills needs
- the inadequate management of work-based learning.

Scope of provision

76. There is a wide range of provision for full-time and part-time students in hairdressing, beauty therapy and holistic therapy. It is effectively provided at times and through modes of attendance that meet students' different requirements. The provision includes: hairdressing at NVQ levels 1, 2 and 3; beauty therapy at levels 2 and 3; and aromatherapy and reflexology. Part-time courses include nail art and Indian head massage. There are also courses accredited by open college network (OCN) to widen participation which provide a clear progression route for students from introductory level to level 3 and above. At the time of the inspection, there were 102 full-time and 120 part-time students aged 16 to 18 and 98 full-time and 405 part-time students aged 19 and over. There were 26 foundation and 5 advanced modern apprentices.

Achievement and standards

77. Pass rates on body massage certificate for the two years to 2002 have been outstanding. In 2002, the pass rates on short courses were high or very high including aromatherapy at 90%, nail art at 100% and the diploma in reflexology at 93%. Pass rates for hairdressing at levels 1 and 2 have both declined significantly between 2000 and 2001, but started to improve in 2002. The pass rate on the NVQ beauty therapy at level 3 in 2001 was very high, but declined by over 30% in 2002. Retention rates for the body massage courses improved over the three years to 2002 to well above the national average for the sector. Retention rates for hairdressing at NVQ level 1 were high, but at NVQ level 2 they declined by 20% between 2000 and 2002. Retention and pass rates on work-based learning programmes are very low. Over the five years, only 20% of work-based learners have completed their programme of learning successfully.

78. Most students' practical skills are good. Students in a beauty therapy class quickly attained the skills to provide clients with a high standard of treatments, particularly in nail technology, eyelash care, massage, waxing and vacuum work. Students have developed effective social skills and provide clients with good customer care. Student portfolios are of a high standard. They are well presented, word-processed and use photographs and diagrams well. The development of some hairdressing students' vocational skills is slow and not to the standard required by industry. Students' progress in key skills is slow.

A sample of retention and pass rates in hairdressing and beauty therapy, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ hairdressing	1	No. of starts	35	*	17
		% retention	83	100	94
		% pass rate	83	56	73
NVQ hairdressing (two year)	2	No. of starts	124	75	78
		% retention	73	55	44
		% pass rate	91	69	71
NVQ beauty therapy (one year)	2	No. of starts	41	37	50
		% retention	78	78	72
		% pass rate	69	69	72
Body massage certificate (one year)	2	No. of starts	33	24	33
		% retention	76	75	82
		% pass rate	72	100	100
NVQ beauty therapy	3	No. of starts	21	18	12
		% retention	76	100	83

		% pass rate	75	94	60
Reflexology diploma short	3	No. of starts	15	18	34
		% retention	93	94	85
		% pass rate	79	88	93

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

*less than 15 starts

Quality of education and training

79. There is some good and excellent teaching in beauty and holistic therapy. Teaching in hairdressing is mostly satisfactory to good. In the most effective lessons, teachers develop students' ideas and increase their understanding. In hairdressing, the teaching of cutting techniques is based on established and well-known industry training techniques. All students follow their own individual learning plans to achieve their learning targets. Teachers are aware of students' individual learning needs, plan lessons to take account of these needs and encourage students to organise their own learning. For example, in a beauty therapy lesson, students set their own learning targets and were proud when they reached them. All staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Accommodation is satisfactory and there is an appropriate level of resources. There is regular staff training.

80. A feature of less effective lessons is that they are often poorly managed. For example, in a demonstration of vertical pleats, most students could not see what was happening and the teacher did not establish students' interest at an early stage of the lesson. In some cases, when overhead projectors are used, the classroom lights are not turned off so that students can see the screen clearly. There are insufficient clients for all students in salons. Students have made slow progress in developing their key skills. In 2002/03, there were no key skill classes for ten weeks through a shortage of staff. In work-based learning, the links between on-the-job and off-the-job training are poor.

81. Assessment in college is thorough and students are aware of what they need to do to progress. The monitoring of student progress is good and constructive feedback is given to students. Internal verification is not thorough. For example, internal verification dates have not been met. Records show that there is no cover for absent assessors. Work-based assessors, employed in salons are not observed carrying out assessments. In work-based learning, the assessment is too infrequent. Some learners have only been assessed once in the workplace after six months of training. The use of accreditation of prior learning is poor. Work-based learners have little understanding of the NVQ appeals assessment process.

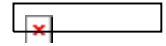
82. Good pre-course advice directs potential students to the most appropriate course. Induction thoroughly prepares students for their studies. Students receive good support through a comprehensive tutorial system. All students have good access to specialist support services. As part of an equal opportunities initiative, students prepare presentations on the use of beauty therapy in different ethnic communities. Insufficiently early use of diagnostic assessment to identify basic skills needs leads to delay in students being given the appropriate support.

Leadership and management

83. The management of college is satisfactory. The staff team is enthusiastic and committed to the success of their students. The team has identified some of the shortcomings in curriculum management and has developed plans to resolve them. Teachers have worked to improve the key skills provision for students. At the time of inspection, it was too early to assess the effectiveness of this work. Curriculum managers make insufficient use of data to analyse trends in pass and retention rates. The management of work-based learning is weak. There is poor awareness among these learners of the extent of their progress. Dates set as targets for achievement are not checked and

revised on a regular basis. Their individual learning plans are not updated and in some cases contain out-of-date information. Salon owners are unaware of the weekly activities planned for off-the-job training. Some learners receive no training sessions in the salons, no models are arranged for them to practise on and no assessment planning for on-the-job learning takes place for either training or practice.

Childcare



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- the good level of practical skills
- well-planned progression pathways in 2002/03.

Weaknesses

- very low retention rates at NVQ level 2
- low pass rates on courses at levels 2 and 3
- the lack of student interaction in small classes
- insufficient use of feedback on teaching and learning by students and placement supervisors.

Scope of provision

84. The college offers a good range of full-time and part-time courses in childcare for students aged from 14 upwards. There is an entry level certificate in childcare, and a foundation course at level 1 in caring for children. NVQs in early years care and education and in play work are offered at levels 2 and 3. A course in childminding practice and a diploma in childcare and education are offered at level 3. An advanced diploma in childcare and education, a level 4 qualification, is available part time. At the time of the inspection, there were 45 full-time students aged between 14 and 18, and 9 part-time students aged 16 to 18, and 260 students aged 19 and over on part-time courses. An outreach course for classroom assistants is provided at a local primary school.

Achievement and standards

85. Retention rates on NVQ courses at level 2 were very low. Rates declined to well below the national average for the sector in 2002. There were some improvements in other retention rates in 2002, but the retention rate on the 2002/03 diploma in childcare and education course has been unsatisfactory. Of the 14 students who started in September in 2002, only 7 remained at the time of the inspection. Pass rates are low on NVQs at levels 2 and 3, and on the certificate in childcare and education. Only 10% of students completing the diploma in childcare and education course achieved a qualification in 2002. Pass rates on the advanced diploma in childcare and education were below the national average for the sector. Pass rates were good on two new courses, a foundation course and a certificate in developing childminding practice. However, the numbers of students on those courses, at nine and six, respectively, were very small.

86. The standard of students' written work is satisfactory on most courses. It is good on the full-time courses at levels 1 and 2. Students develop good practical skills, for example, in preparing feeds, bathing babies, and creating artwork for children. Most full-time students achieve an additional qualification in creative skills that helps their work with children. Attendance in lessons during the inspection was 83%. Most students were punctual. Those who arrived more than 10 minutes late were sent to work under supervision in the early childhood resource centre until their next lesson.

A sample of retention and pass rates in childcare, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
NVQ early years care and education (1 and 2 year combined)	3	No. of starts	77	37	68
		% retention	69	62	38
		% pass rate	55	11	50
NVQ early years care and education (2 and 3 year courses combined)	3	No. of starts	46	69	28
		% retention	70	64	89
		% pass rate	58	23	46
Diploma in nursery nursing	3	No. of starts	112	49	***
		% retention	56	80	83
		% pass rate	**	60	78
Diploma in childcare and education	3	No. of starts	*	*	15
		% retention	*	*	80
		% pass rate	*	*	10
Advanced diploma in childcare and education	4	No. of starts	56	45	29
		% retention	75	62	83
		% pass rate	**	63	61

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

** data unreliable

*** less than 15 starts

Quality of education and training

87. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Most lessons are well planned and have clear objectives that

are shared with students. In the most effective lessons, teachers provide learning activities that take account of individual learning needs and make good use of students' work-placement experience. In these lessons, teachers carefully link learning activities to assessment criteria to help students prepare for written assignments. In small classes, there is a lack of stimulation and challenge for students and insufficient interaction between them which holds back their learning. In some lessons, the learning activities do not meet the needs of all the students. For example, in one small class, the teaching approach focused on one group of students while the remaining students did not take part in the lesson.

88. Groups from different courses are supervised together in the early childhood resource centre to complete their written work. This approach is successful when students have a clear target to achieve. Students with unclear targets did not use the time well and completed little work. Teachers' written feedback on coursework is uneven in standard. In some cases, clear and helpful guidance is given on how to improve, in others, insufficient guidance is provided. All students spend time on work placements to help link theory to the practical experience of working with children. Students on two-year courses on work experience receive only three visits from college tutors over the two years.

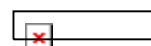
89. Staff have made improvements to the assessment and internal verification of NVQs and other courses in response to external verifiers' reports. A significant proportion of coursework on the diploma in childcare and education in 2001/02 was not assessed according to the requirements of awarding body criteria, which had a serious effect on achievement; only one student passed. Second-year students on the course in 2002/03 have undertaken a large part of their first year's work in their second year.

90. Good support is provided for the development of study skills. Study support is timetabled weekly for all entry, foundation and level 2 courses. Teachers ensure that students make good use of the college's services for the diagnosis of dyslexia and provide supporting equipment. Resources are good. There is ample provision of books, periodicals and specialist equipment. Teachers are appropriately qualified and almost all are completing additional qualifications.

Leadership and management

91. The management of childcare provision is unsatisfactory. However, a new section leader was appointed to manage childcare courses and has started to make improvements. Major changes, including staffing, from September 2002 have taken place to improve the provision. From 2002, new courses have been introduced at levels 1 and 2 to meet students' needs more appropriately and to provide better progression routes from level 1 to level 4. In previous years, the courses on offer changed frequently and did not always enable students to progress from one level to the next. Managers have made efforts to improve some low or very low retention rates by, for example, more thorough initial assessment of students' individual learning needs. The retention rate has improved except on the diploma in childcare and education. More opportunities for study at level 2 have been introduced in 2002/03 to prepare students more effectively for study at level 3. The level 2 certificate in childcare and education has also recruited well and had a high retention rate at the time of the inspection. It was too early to assess the impact of the additional provision at level 2 on achievement at level 3. Student representatives from each course attend course meetings to discuss their concerns with staff. The views of part-time students are obtained by means of questionnaires. However, there are no questionnaires for full-time students, and insufficient use is made of feedback from students which improvements to teaching and learning are being considered. The views of work-placement supervisors about learning in the workplace and the effectiveness of their communication with the college are not obtained.

Health and social care



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high retention rates on most courses
- high pass rates on GNVQ intermediate and introduction to counselling
- effective group work in many lessons
- good progression
- wide range of effective support for students.

Weaknesses

- consistently low pass rates on NVQ courses and GNVQ foundation
- very low achievement on work-based learning
- unsatisfactory teaching in some lessons
- inadequate assessment practice on some programmes
- insufficient identification and development of key skills in lessons
- some unsatisfactory resources.

Scope of provision

92. In health and social care, there are full-time foundation and intermediate level courses and an AVCE that was introduced in 2002. There is a range of NVQ programmes in care at levels 2 and 3 and the residential care manager award at level 4. All these courses offer progression to the

foundation degree in community health and social care. The college offers courses in counselling ranging from the level 1 introduction to basic counselling skills to the advanced diploma in counselling skills. At the time of the inspection, there were 195 students on these courses, just under 40% full time and the remainder part time. In addition, four learners were undertaking work-based programmes and two were on Jobcentre plus programmes. The college has also been involved in training to meet the needs of the care industry.

Achievement and standards

93. There are high retention rates on most courses. The GNVQ foundation in health and social care, the introduction to counselling and the NVQ level 3 had retention rates consistently well above the national averages over the three years to 2002. The retention rate on the GNVQ intermediate level course in health and social care improved to well above the national average for the sector in 2002. Students' pass rates have been generally good on the GNVQ intermediate level in health and social care and introduction to counselling courses over the same period, but were consistently low on NVQ courses and GNVQ foundation in health and social care. The certificate in counselling skills has had high pass rates in two of the three years to 2002. Progression to the next level of study, to related employment and to HE is good. The pass rate on work-based learning is exceptionally low. Of 16 learners who started in 2001, 15 withdrew and only 1 completed the framework.

94. Most students' work is of a satisfactory standard. Students' contributions in several lessons show real insight. They draw on their personal experiences in life to illustrate the theory and on counselling courses demonstrate good levels of self-awareness.

A sample of retention and pass rates in health and social care, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation in health and social care	1	No. of starts	17	15	*
		% retention	71	93	92
		% pass rate	83	53	51
Introduction to counselling	1	No. of starts	79	44	51
		% retention	90	90	100
		% pass rate	90	90	86
GNVQ intermediate in health and social care	2	No. of starts	29	20	19
		% retention	45	70	89
		% pass rate	77	43	71
NVQ care	2	No. of starts	143	27	57
		% retention	88	48	74
		% pass rate	55	44	59
Certificate in counselling skills	3	No. of starts	87	*	33
		% retention	75	75	94
		% pass rate	90	90	68
NVQ care	3	No. of starts	98	83	82
		% retention	90	81	83
		% pass rate	74	9	53

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* less than 15 starts

Quality of education and training

95. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. Students make above satisfactory progress in just over half the lessons. In the more effective lessons, teachers used small group work productively to sustain students' interest and develop their knowledge. For example, in one lesson, students undertook a role-play carefully scripted by the teacher from which they identified the different roles played by members of a group and how these influenced the functioning of a group. In their feedback, the students engaged in a critical and analytical debate with the teacher. Teachers make effective use of their good links with local agencies to develop students' investigative skills. Where teaching is not always satisfactory, tasks are often unclear and students become confused, lose concentration or become distracted, and progress is then slow. In some lessons, teachers fail to check that students are understanding the work and do not challenge them to think and discuss. When there are discussions, they occasionally diverge from the objectives of the lesson. The staff are aware of the difficulties of teaching key skills and have linked this work more closely to students' vocational studies and assessments. In lessons, there is insufficient identification and reinforcement of key skills.

96. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have up-to-date professional experience. Staff shortages and frequent timetable changes have adversely affected students' learning and enrichment opportunities. Staff have inadequate access to IT facilities to develop the use of ILT in the classroom. Students have good access to poor computers. Many of the teaching rooms are untidy and students' work is poorly displayed. A well-stocked and well-used learning resource room in the curriculum area complements facilities in the learning resource centre.

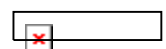
97. Assessment is mostly fair and accurate, but some marking is generous. Comments on written work clearly indicate which assessment criteria are met, but contain few comments on how students might improve their grades. Some assignment briefs are unclear. Assessment in the workplace is not always well planned and has led to slow progress on NVQ provision. Induction of new assessors is unsatisfactory. A more rigorous internal verification process has been established and is beginning to address these issues.

98. Students make effective use of college support services. Personal tutors regularly review progress, set targets and discuss personal issues affecting students' work. Students are kept well aware of their progress. All staff guide and support students in their academic work outside classes. Students make good use of additional learning support staff. A learning support worker works alongside teachers in the larger classes in addition to helping students in the learning resource room. Punctuality and attendance are monitored carefully.

Leadership and management

99. Leadership and management for this curriculum area are satisfactory. The members of the team work well together, help each other and hold regular meetings to organise courses and deal with emerging issues. Courses are reviewed annually and particular attention is paid to achievement data. Managers and staff are aware of pass and retention rate targets set for the year. Their plans to improve pass rates have not been effective. Some strengths are overstated in the self-assessment report and some weaknesses are given insufficient weight. The effectiveness of action plans is not evaluated until the end of the year.

Visual and performing arts



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- a high retention rate on performing arts courses
- high pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate performing arts course
- very good teaching in performing arts
- high standards of work in performing arts at level 1 and 2
- effective curriculum management and staff team work in performing arts
- excellent resources in music and sound technology and traditional photography
- good enrichment opportunities in performing arts.

Weaknesses

- low retention rates on music technology courses
- low pass rates on the popular music course
- unsatisfactory curriculum management in sound and music technology
- no sharing of good practice across the four sections
- some poor equipment and accommodation.

Scope of provision

100. The provision within visual and performing arts is on two sites and organised within four separate sections: entertainment and performing arts; photography and digital imagery; creative arts; and sound and music technology. The performing arts section offers full-time GNVQ foundation and intermediate courses and a two-year AVCE in drama. In the sound and music technology section, there are two music technology courses at BTEC first and national diploma level. The digital imagery and photography section have introduced a BTEC national diploma in multimedia and offer part-time OCN and City and Guilds photography courses. The creative studies section offers traditional classes in interior design, paint effects and soft furnishings. At the time of the inspection, there were around 160 full-time students and 600 part-time students following the FE programmes. There is a range of HE courses. There are good progression opportunities in performing arts, but these are more limited in sound and music where there is no level 1 provision. There are good links with the community in performing arts. Fashion students progress from OCN courses to the national diploma and to HE. There are good enrichment opportunities in performing arts and all students take the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts (LAMDA) acting grades and International Dance Teaching Association (IDTA) awards. All students take part in the many live performances throughout the year.

Achievement and standards

101. Students' practical work in performing arts is good. Their skills in dance, script work, ensemble acting and singing are of a high standard. The written work and performance diaries are thorough and suitably detailed. There is a high retention rate in both the GNVQ foundation and intermediate and high pass rates on the GNVQ intermediate course. In fashion, there are high pass rates, although the numbers on courses are small. The attention to detail, and the construction and finish of garments are good. However, the drawing and initial design work is weak; research of imagery and media is inadequate. The work of students on the national diploma multimedia shows a growing understanding of the software. The college has a developing CoVE in sound engineering. The students' achievements at level 3 are unsatisfactory. The courses for the national diploma popular music and national diploma in music technology have had very low retention and pass rates; the retention rate has remained poor, at 37%, in 2002/03. The computer-generated work of the retained music technology students is sophisticated and makes full use of the professional quality of modern technology. Many music students have no instrument skills, which limits their performance studies. Students in creative studies have an appropriate standard of traditional skills.

A sample of retention and pass rates in visual and performing arts, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GNVQ foundation performing arts and entertainment	1	No. of starts	*	*	34
		% retention	*	*	88
		% pass rate	*	*	73
Precursor 2000/01 GNVQ 2002 intermediate performing arts and entertainment	2	No. of starts	38	44	**
		% retention	84	77	100
		% pass rate	70	71	92
City and Guilds 7802 intermediate design	2	No. of starts	38	18	26
		% retention	84	50	69
		% pass rate	66	89	94
City and Guilds 6923 photography progression award (year 1)	2	No. of starts	*	*	29
		% retention	*	*	69
		% pass rate	*	*	35
National diploma in design audio and visual	3	No. of starts	41	17	15
		% retention	32	63	60

		% pass rate	92	100	89
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Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

** fewer than 15 starts

Quality of education and training

102. Teaching in the performing arts is very good. Staff plan and prepare well and use suitably detailed notes on individual students to set demanding standards for each of them. In one dance lesson, intermediate students were working successfully on a complex sequence of jazz dance moves with energy and enthusiasm. Teaching in other sections is satisfactory, but lacks appropriate variety. In many cases, there is too little opportunity for students to respond and play an active part in lessons. In most areas, staff make good use of their professional and industrial experience in their teaching.

103. There is regular assessment. Staff use detailed tracking forms to monitor student progress and feedback to them is good. The written feedback to students in performing arts is also suitably detailed and positive, and makes sound suggestions for improvement.

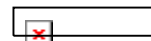
104. Students are well supported by the teaching staff. Performing arts students find teachers approachable and supportive. There are regular academic tutorials and reviews of students' progress. The personal tutor system, which the college has introduced involving non-subject specialist tutors, has had mixed results. In multimedia, a tutor was absent for a number of months and no replacement was found. Attendance at tutorials is low. Students make good use of students' services and welfare support.

105. The quality of accommodation and resources is uneven. The excellent facility for music technology and sound recording at Smethwick supports the work of the CoVE. It includes professionally soundproofed studios, state of the art multi-track and digital recording facilities and a range of midi music studios. The interior design and soft furnishing studios at Smethwick are good. The photography facilities are excellent for traditional and digital photography, but the computer facilities are inadequate for multi-media work. The performing arts section uses a large hall that provides a good theatre space. However, in other areas, noise from adjacent spaces is intrusive and in one, an unpleasant smell has been upsetting students. There are no individual secure shower and changing facilities and insufficient locker and storage spaces for dancers.

Leadership and management

106. Overall, management of visual and performing arts is satisfactory. There is particularly effective curriculum management and teamwork in performing arts. The courses and section are well organised. There are open and regular communications and weekly meetings. Clear targets are set. There are suitably detailed notes on individual students' progress including regular analysis of attendance records. In other sections, the management is less rigorous. There is no system for sharing good practice between sections. In music and sound technology, there is no effective strategy for dealing with the serious problems over retention rates. The collection of data on retention and pass rates is insufficiently thorough. The outcomes of teaching observations are not shared with individual staff, nor do they form part of the appraisal process. Budgets for consumable resources are low.

Humanities



Overall provision in this area is **unsatisfactory (grade 4)**

Strengths

- high pass rates in GCE A2 sociology and GCE A2 law in 2002

- good teaching on GCE A-level courses

- good pastoral support for adults.

Weaknesses

- low retention and pass rates in GCE AS sociology

- poor records for attendance and punctuality

- unsuitable teaching accommodation at one site

- insufficient use of students' prior achievements in setting targets

- insufficient use of management information for improvement of performance.

Scope of provision

107. Courses in humanities are offered by three of the college's four faculties. There is a good range of courses for adults. The faculty of vocational studies is responsible for courses for access to nursing, which can be studied in the daytime or in the evening over one or two years. An access to HE course may also be studied in the day or in the evening. There are specialist pathways in teaching and in community studies. Advanced level humanities courses include sociology, psychology and law and are studied mainly by students aged 16 to 18. A full-time GCSE humanities programme was introduced in 2002/03. At the time of the inspection, there were 262 full-time students and 1,051 part-time students studying humanities.

Achievement and standards

108. There were high pass rates in GCE A2 sociology and GCE A2 law in 2002. The pass rates were 100% and 86% respectively. The pass rate in GCE A2 psychology in the same year was 75% and the retention rate was good, at 92%. The retention and pass rates in GCE AS sociology over the last two years were poor and consistently below the national average for the sector. The standard of students' work is satisfactory. Students produce written work to an appropriate standard for the courses studied. Referencing in students' assignments is good, although not all students include bibliographies in their work. Students make satisfactory use of the Internet when preparing assignment work. However, too many students attach long articles printed from Internet sources in their assignments that do not serve any effective purpose.

109. During the inspection, the average attendance rate in lessons, at 69%, was below the average for the sector. In many lessons, students arrived late and disrupted the learning of others. The teachers rarely required explanations from students who were late.

A sample of retention and pass rates in humanities, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
GCE AS law	3	No. of starts	*	20	27
		% retention	*	90	59
		% pass rate	*	56	63
GCE AS psychology	3	No. of starts	*	22	42
		% retention	*	86	76
		% pass rate	*	68	78
GCE AS sociology	3	No. of starts	*	23	15
		% retention	*	70	67
		% pass rate	*	69	40
Access to HE	3	No. of starts	**	**	**
		% retention	**	**	**
		% pass rate	**	**	**

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

* course did not run

** data unreliable

Quality of education and training

110. Teaching is mainly good on GCE A-level courses. Students work together effectively in class. Teachers use question and answer sessions well to check that students understand and to get them to think more deeply about the work. Good use is made of videos. For example, in a GCE AS psychology class, short video clips were shown of an actor dressed in a uniform asking members of the public to perform an increasingly bizarre range of actions. This clip led to a discussion about why soldiers obey orders in wartime. Teachers use role play in an imaginative way to enhance students' understanding. For example, in a GCE A2 law lesson, students were invited to act out the role of members of a jury in a civil trial. Two students were asked to act as counsel for the defendant and for the claimant. Students played the jury and deliberated on their verdict. The students enjoyed the lesson and made excellent use of legal language and argument. In the less effective lessons the pace of learning was frequently too slow, there were not enough activities to involve and motivate the students and there were insufficient checks that they understood the work. Many GCSE classes are very small and provide limited opportunities for group work and debate.

111. Teaching staff are well qualified and experienced and there are regular professional development opportunities. All teachers have a teaching qualification or are working towards one. Specialist staff who teach on the access to nursing course hold nursing qualifications. There is unsuitable teaching accommodation at the West Bromich Campus. Noise from adjoining rooms and a nearby foyer makes teaching and learning very difficult. Computing facilities on this site are poor; many machines are slow and Internet access is often unavailable.

112. Students' work is marked thoroughly, but teachers do not pay sufficient attention to errors in spelling and punctuation. Comments on assignments are helpful and tell students how to improve. The grading of students' work is satisfactory and meets awarding body criteria. Internal verification is thorough. Internal verifiers' feedback to teachers is helpful, but not always sufficiently detailed.

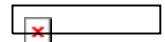
113. There are insufficient opportunities for students to take part in enrichment activities, such as wider key skills, and there is no formal programme. Key skills work for students on advanced level programmes is not integrated into their main programme of study. Students do not value key skills teaching and many do not understand the relevance of key skills to their main qualification.

114. Pastoral support for adult students is good. Students value the help and advice that their teachers and tutors provide. Tutors make themselves available to students at times that fit in with students' other commitments and they provide constructive advice and referral where appropriate. Tutorials are satisfactory. All full-time students are allocated to a personal tutor. Tutorials take place weekly to review students' progress. Students do not always value tutorials highly and some do not attend. The college is currently piloting a new West Midlands based scheme to measure progress made against previous academic performance. This scheme is not fully operational and there are some difficulties in identifying if students are working to their full potential.

Leadership and management

115. The leadership and management of the humanities curriculum area are weak. Managers and teaching staff do not use management information effectively to identify trends in performance as a step on the way to raising standards. Data on access courses are inaccurate. Poor attendance and punctuality were recognised in the self-assessment report. The methods of combating poor attendance have not led to improvements. There is insufficient sharing of good practice between teachers of access courses. A new head of faculty was appointed just before the inspection. At the time of the inspection, it was too early to identify the impact of this appointment. Regular team meetings ensure satisfactory internal communications. Most staff belong to several teams. Specific staff responsibilities for an area of work are not clear.

English for speakers of other languages



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- high pass and retention rates for examination courses

- imaginative use by teachers of students' first languages

- good partnership arrangements to widen participation
- a good range of progression routes.

Weaknesses

- the lack of attention to individual learning needs in some lessons
- insufficiently developed use of individual learning plans
- insufficient sharing of good practice.

Scope of provision

116. Courses in ESOL, from pre-entry to level 1, are offered at the college or at community venues. Of the 1,076 ESOL students on courses at the time of the inspection, all were adult students and most were part time. There are clear progression routes between pre-entry and level 1. Much of the community provision is franchised with other providers. The community venues make a significant contribution to widening participation for ESOL students and improving access to learning. The college uses the new national standards and core curriculum for ESOL. The programmes meet the needs of students drawn from a wide range of cultural, educational and social backgrounds. In all, some 12 different languages are spoken by students. The college also offers ICT, numeracy and citizenship to build up students' confidence and skills. Most students are local residents of Sandwell and include some people with refugee status.

Achievement and standards

117. Pass rates for adults were high in 2002 and above the national averages for the sector on externally examined courses. The pass rates have improved from 49% in 2001 to 80% in 2002, while enrolments have increased by over 100%. Students' retention rates are better than the national average on ESOL courses. In lessons, most students' work is satisfactory or better and they make good progress against prior levels of attainment. They gain in confidence and self-esteem during their time at college. Many students make good use of their own languages to understand complex English vocabulary.

A sample of retention and pass rates in English for speakers of other languages, 2000 to 2002

Qualification	Level	Completion year:	2000	2001	2002
Pitman basic (one year)	1	No. of starts	86	208	281
		% retention	67	69	71
		% pass rate	66	49	80
Pitman intermediate	1	No. of starts	56	102	138

		% retention	66	68	74
		% pass rate	89	62	63
OCN basic	1	No. of starts	88	228	113
		% retention	46	69	87
		% pass rate	93	42	73

Source: ISR (2000 and 2001), college (2002)

Quality of education and training

118. Most teaching is satisfactory to good. In the more effective lessons, teachers ensure that the needs of individual students are met. Teachers have good multi-lingual skills. In lessons, teachers organise students into groups according to level of expertise and language. Students at a similar standard support one another in these lessons, which helps them to make sound progress. Teachers ensure that students make good use of bilingual dictionaries to develop their research skills. For example, in a citizenship class, students used bilingual dictionaries effectively to research the college's equal opportunities policy. Such studying helps to reach a better understanding of language and society. Teachers are also skilful in encouraging students to experiment in the use of more advanced English language skills. In some less effective lessons, there is insufficient attention to individual learning needs and not enough opportunity for students to engage in practical activities. Teachers have schemes of work for each course, but these do not always match the individual needs of students as identified in their learning plans. In these lessons, contributions from students at pre-entry level are frequently limited to simple verbal phrases and insufficient demands are made on advanced students. ICT is used to develop literacy and language skills, but the exercises do not always take account of the language skills of pre-entry course students.

119. Franchised provision is provided by seven agencies. Most students are women. The teaching styles used in these lessons take account of the students' learning needs and styles of learning. The lessons are based on students' every day activities and are conducted in a relaxed way to ease any inhibitions about learning.

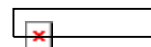
120. Initial assessment is used well to place students on appropriate programmes. Students are also offered a six-hour taster that familiarises them with the course. Learning targets are negotiated with students as an integral part of their individual learning plans. Teachers monitor students' progress weekly and complete formal reviews every four weeks. Most individual learning plans link to the new curriculum but some do not contain sufficiently detailed short-term measurable targets of the kind that would enable students' progress to be tracked effectively. Some students' portfolios do not have an appropriate level of detail in the recording of progress against their individual learning plans.

121. All staff are appropriately qualified and have good ESOL experience. Staff have attended training for the new basic skills core curriculum and are using the standards in their teaching. Computer equipment is out-of-date and slow. Students have access to IT and the Internet at all the college sites.

Leadership and management

122. Management of ESOL is satisfactory. There are clear policies and teaching methods for basic skills covering ESOL, literacy, numeracy and needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A section leader, who reports to the head of faculty for foundation and community provision, manages the ESOL team. The curriculum team meets monthly, but there is insufficient sharing of good practice on the implementation of the new curriculum. A college curriculum inspection identified a number of weaknesses including the failure to take sufficient account of individual learning needs in teaching and found some shortcomings in the use of learning materials. At the time of the inspection, these weaknesses were being resolved, but it was too early to judge the degree of success. Some staff are unaware of the current requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



Overall provision in this area is **good (grade 2)**

Strengths

- good teaching

- good use in lessons of individual students' short term targets

- the good range of provision for students with a wide range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities

- strong and effective links with external organisations to widen participation

- good achievement of learning goals in subject areas.

Weaknesses

- ineffective co-ordination of target setting between subjects

- lack of access to appropriate ICT resources.

Scope of provision

123. The college offers a wide range of full-time and part-time programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vocational access studies programme (VAS) is for students with severe and profound learning difficulties and has three parts: the schools link programme which is a two-year, part-time course to support young people in their transition from school to college; the transition to adult life programme which is a three year programme for students aged 16 to 22; and the adult programme. The VAS programme offers a range of modules including independent living, photography, sport and IT. At the time of the inspection, there were 93 students aged 16 to 18, of whom around a fifth were part time, and 575 students aged 19 and over, of whom just over a half were part time.

124. The integrated studies programme is a full-time programme for students with mild to moderate

learning difficulties and covers basic skills, IT and vocational options. The pathways programme for students with mental health difficulties is a flexibly organised programme consisting of a range of modules on anxiety management, IT, anger management and creative design. The pathways provision is part time and runs in blocks of 12 weeks. The life skills programme is for students aged 16 to 18 who may have social or emotional problems and basic skills needs. Some may have been youth offenders or are not yet ready to enter work-based learning or vocational or academic courses at college. Students join the life skills programme for a minimum of 16 hours a week and attend a variety of modules such as citizenship, budgeting, literacy and numeracy, and practical activities including sport.

Achievement and standards

125. Students' achievements are good, especially in lessons that include practical activities. In real work simulations, such as the team enterprise programme, students develop good communication, team building and basic skills related to working life. They make good progress towards learning goals in particular subjects. All students have individual learning plans for each subject, which teachers use effectively in planning lessons to help students to meet their learning targets. Targets are set on a weekly basis and progress is reviewed and recorded. Students' achievements are celebrated within the class. For example, in one lesson, students were given a copy of their weekly target to attach to their work file and when the target was achieved, it was placed on the wall. In a photography lesson, students' pictures and weekly targets were displayed in the classroom to help them to focus on their achievements for that week. There is ineffective co-ordination of the longer-term targets in students' individual learning plans. A review of overall progress takes place each term for VAS and integrated studies students. There is no formal process for co-ordinating and setting common levels of basic skills targets across subjects for individual students' programmes for the following term. For example, in one lesson, students were working towards a higher level of numeracy and literacy while, in another lesson, some of the same students were working towards a much lower level.

126. Achievement of individual learning plans on vocational access studies ranges from between 90% and 95%. The standard of students' work is high; they make good progress towards their learning goals.

Quality of education and training

127. Most teaching is good. Teachers are successful in their use of a variety of teaching methods, both in practical and theory lessons. In the most effective lessons, teaching is well planned to meet the needs of individual students. There are imaginative methods of developing basic skills through sport and games. For example, in one lesson, students played pass the parcel. The students receiving the parcel were asked by the tutor to answer a question related to one of their targets. The students were highly motivated by the fun and practical activities in these lessons. Support tutors provide good one-to-one coaching in lessons. Staff work closely with students to make sure that they are not having problems with their studies and are not troubled by personal issues.

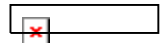
128. Staff are well qualified and experienced in teaching students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Paper-based learning materials are of a satisfactory standard; teachers use them well in lessons. Some classrooms have ICT facilities. However, there is insufficient access to appropriate ICT resources in some lessons and not enough opportunity for students to use such resources in their own time. For example, students attending a CLAIT course were working with older specification software than was generally available in the college, which was slowing the pace of their learning.

129. There are strong links with external organisations to widen participation including links with mental health services, social services, parents and carers. There is an integrated approach with these organisations to provide help and support for students. For example, staff visit doctors' surgeries to promote the college's services and visit day centres to talk to care workers when students are facing problems.

Leadership and management

130. Provision is well managed. Staff and managers meet frequently on an informal basis to discuss day-to-day issues and any difficulties that students are experiencing. These meetings help staff to share experiences and to support each other through their discussions on how to respond to students. All staff are involved in the self-assessment process and meet formally monthly or termly to evaluate programmes and share good practice. There are plenty of opportunities for staff development. Many staff have achieved professional qualifications and have attended short specialist courses such as autistic spectrum disorder training.

Literacy and numeracy



Overall provision in this area is **satisfactory (grade 3)**

Strengths

- much good teaching

- good specialist support for students

- a wide range of provision in the community.

Weaknesses

- late identification of literacy or numeracy needs of some students

- inadequate collection and analysis of data for management purposes

- poor resources in some community centres.

Scope of provision

131. To develop the basic skills of literacy and numeracy among students on its campuses and at community venues, the college provides support in several ways. These include: literacy and numeracy support for students on vocational courses; family learning programmes; literacy and numeracy courses for adults; and drop-in arrangements at the literacy and numeracy study centres. There is basic skills support for key skills and GCSE mathematics and English. Students can also enrol on accredited and non-accredited programmes linked to the adult core curriculum in literacy

and numeracy. At the time of the inspection, there were 623 students attending literacy and numeracy programmes and the literacy and numeracy learning centres.

Achievement and standards

132. In 2001/02, there were 344 students referred to literacy and numeracy study centres, 62 students receiving support during lessons for their main course of study and 13 students in small group support. The pass rates of these three groups, based on the achievement of students' individual learning plans, were 77%, 74% and 85%, respectively. In 2001/02, there was a retention rate of 76% and a pass rate of 74% in the literacy and numeracy courses for adults and a retention rate of 60% and a pass rate of 100% in the family learning programmes. In 2001/02, 572 visits were made by students to the literacy and numeracy study centres. Students progress towards targets in their individual learning plans at a satisfactory pace; the standard of portfolio work is also satisfactory and sometimes good. Many students progress to other courses at college and some into HE.

Quality of education and training

133. There is much good teaching. Lessons are well planned. In the more effective lessons, teachers make sure that students clearly understand the objectives of lessons. Learning materials are good and relevant either to the students' vocational area or to their career aims. Teachers use individual basic skills short-term targets to support students' primary learning goals. Students' progress is regularly measured against these targets. The process is well documented and clearly profiles students' progress throughout their time on the programmes. In some reviews, the reasons for lack of achievement of targets are not recorded. Teachers create a supportive and encouraging atmosphere in lessons. Students are confident, play a full part in lessons, and make effective contributions. Teachers use a range of learning activities to motivate students and help to develop their confidence.

134. However, in some lessons, the teaching does not sufficiently engage and motivate the students. In others, teachers do not address the full range of ability in the class and thus do not meet the needs of all the students. In a few lessons, learning materials are poorly reproduced and in some instances are at an inappropriate level for the students using them.

135. There is good support for students with additional learning needs. They may have identified the need themselves or been identified through a basic skills assessment. Students on vocational programmes are able improve their basic skills in vocational lessons through the help that they receive from specialist tutors using relevant subject materials. Students with specific disabilities are well supported. However, not all students with additional support needs are identified sufficiently early in their courses. All students aged 16 to 18 take part in a key skills assessment. Students entering programmes at levels 1 and 2 normally only take part in an assessment of basic skills when a tutor realises that particular students are experiencing difficulty with the level of work. Such students are then referred to learning support tutors.

136. The literacy and numeracy study centres at the Smethwick and West Bromwich campuses have good specialist equipment and materials, including ICT, audio, magazines and reference books. However, students coming to study at these centres have to cope with distractions as two or three other activities are often timetabled at the same time in the centres, and other staff and students are coming and going much of the time. There is a lack of resources in some centres in the community, a weakness identified at the last inspection. Students do not always have access to ICT and the range of teaching aids and photocopying facilities available to teachers are not always adequate. In many classrooms, there are no secure storage facilities for learning resources.

Leadership and management

137. Leadership and management for literacy and numeracy are satisfactory. An enthusiastic and good course team provides learning support. Some good practice is shared, despite the wide spread of teaching venues across college campuses and in the community. Tutors are experienced and qualified and are using the core curriculum literacy and numeracy standards. There are good

partnerships between the college and a number of external agencies to improve the provision. Effective curriculum planning and staff training has been affected by a shortage of learning support tutors. There is insufficient use of data as a basis for management decisions. The number of visits to literacy and numeracy study centres is recorded. However, there is no analysis of the visits by age, gender, ethnicity, and average attendance for each student nor analysis of the courses students are studying. No statistics are available to identify the impact of additional support for literacy and numeracy on students' achievement in terms of their primary learning goals, their overall retention rate and their progression. Some outreach programmes that started in November 2002 still had no official college registers or course codes at the time of the inspection in March 2003.

Part D: College data

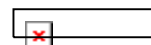
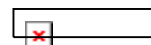


Table 1: Enrolments by level of study and age



Level	16-18	19+
1	31	32
2	38	22
3	22	16
4/5	0	8
Other	9	22
Total	100	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 2: Enrolments by curriculum area and age



Curriculum area	16-18 No.	19+ No.	Total Enrolments
Science and mathematics	849	359	4
Land-based provision	0	0	0
Construction	201	704	3
Engineering, technology and manufacture	584	793	5
Business administration, management and professional	840	3,632	15
Information and communication technology	940	2,116	11
Retailing, customer service and	33	326	1

transportation			
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	696	1,291	7
Hairdressing and beauty therapy	165	354	2
Health, social care and public services	605	2,856	12
Visual and performing arts and media	493	859	5
Humanities	547	1,242	7
English, languages and communication	977	1,174	7
Foundation programmes	1,458	4,568	21
Total	8,388	20,274	100

Source: provided by the college in 2002

Table 3: Retention and achievement

Level (Long Courses)	Retention and pass rate	Completion year					
		16-18			19+		
		1999	2000	2001	1999	2000	2001
1	Starters excluding transfers	1,704	1,030	943	3,182	2,636	2,648
	Retention rate	83	79	79	77	82	78
	National average	77	78	79	74	77	80
	Pass rate	40	61	59	57	67	58
	National average	57	63	65	58	66	69
2	Starters excluding transfers	1,468	1,699	1,248	2,697	3,417	2,283
	Retention rate	73	80	79	76	86	79
	National average	73	74	74	75	77	78
	Pass rate	61	62	61	61	74	62
	National average	63	67	67	62	65	65
3	Starters excluding transfers	816	1,231	1,110	1,837	1,947	1,676
	Retention rate	76	86	82	75	86	82
	National average	75	75	74	76	78	77
	Pass rate	69	63	60	61	70	64
	National average	66	68	69	61	64	66
4/5	Starters excluding	45	48	29	1,410	1,519	737

	transfers						
	Retention rate	82	85	72	85	91	81
	National average	78	77	*	83	84	83
	Pass rate	70	54	27	45	56	42
	National average	57	68	*	50	51	48

Note: summary of retention and achievement for the last three years by age and level of course, compared against national averages for colleges of the same type (that is general FE/tertiary colleges or sixth form colleges).

Sources of information:

1. National averages: *Benchmarking Data 1999 to 2001: Retention and Achievement Rates in Further Education Colleges in England*, Learning and Skills Council, September 2002.

2. College rates for 1999 to 2002: *College ISR*.

* data not available

Table 4: Quality of teaching observed during the inspection by level

Courses	Teaching judged to be:			No of sessions observed
	Good or better %	Satisfactory %	Less than satisfactory %	
Level 3 (advanced)	71	23	6	62
Level 2 (intermediate)	49	38	13	55
Level 1 (foundation)	55	40	5	53
Other sessions	75	19	6	52
Totals	63	29	8	222